

Middle School Initiative

**PART I
COVER SHEET**

CAP 4 SEMESTER 2 WEEK 1

COURSE: Public Affairs Officer Leadership Laboratory, Achievement 11

LESSON TITLE: Effective Writing

LENGTH OF LESSON: 50 Minutes

METHOD: Informal Lecture - Discussion / Guided Discussion

REFERENCE(S): *Leadership: 2000 and Beyond*, Volume II, Chapter 10

AUDIO/VISUAL AIDS/HANDOUTS/ACTIVITY MATERIAL(S): None

COGNITIVE OBJECTIVE: The objective of this class to teach each cadet how to write effectively.

COGNITIVE SAMPLES OF BEHAVIOR: Each cadet should learn how to write effectively as well as the do's and don'ts of a well written paper.

AFFECTIVE OBJECTIVE: N/A

AFFECTIVE SAMPLES OF BEHAVIOR: N/A

Middle School Initiative

PART II TEACHING PLAN

Introduction

ATTENTION: How many of you know the proper way to organize your thoughts before writing a paper? Do you know the proper format for writing an effective paper? Today, we will cover the various techniques for effective writing.

MOTIVATION: When you write something for someone that does not know you, you are creating an impression of yourself. As in speaking, bad impressions are hard to overcome. If you follow the lesson of this class, you should never make a bad impression with something that you have written.

OVERVIEW: During this period, you will learn how to write effectively.

TRANSITION: Remember, speaking and writing is similar in many ways. The same thinking processes and principles of organization lie behind both skills. There are, however, vital differences between a listener and a reader, that require that each skill be treated separately.

Body

MP 1 Of all communication media used, writing is the one used most often for official communication. To write effectively, express your ideas naturally, as in everyday conversation but without the slang or incorrect grammar.

As a preface to this lesson, let's review punctuation. It is used to clarify the meaning of written language. Use punctuation marks only to make the thought clearer. Common punctuation marks and their uses are:

a. **Comma:** This shows the smallest break in continuity of thought in an idea or sentence. It separates words that might otherwise be misunderstood, independent clauses, items in a series, and parallel adjectives.

b. **Semi-colon:** This indicates a sentence break greater than a comma but less than a period. It separates independent clauses not joined by coordinating conjunctions, sentence elements containing commas, or independent clauses joined by parenthetical expressions.

c. **Colon:** This puts strong emphasis on what follows. It is used before a series or list of items or between independent clauses when the second amplifies the first.

d. **Dash:** Use this to indicate a complete or sudden change of thought or to give emphasis to what follows or to what is enclosed by the dashes.

e. **Parentheses:** Use these to enclose inserted material that is loosely connected with the main thought of the sentence. They set off material that you want to be considered incidental.

f. **Quotation Marks:** Use them to set off direct quotations, enclose some titles, to call attention to words, and to define or translate a word.

g. **Apostrophe:** This is used to show possession, mark omissions in contractions, and to form some plurals.

h. **Period:** The most common punctuation mark is the period. It is used as the ordinary end-stop mark of sentences, as a mark of abbreviation, and as a signal that something is being omitted from quoted passages.

Most writing is filled with numbers, dates, and amounts. It is important you express these numbers in narrative form. Generally, spell out numbers less than 10 except in special cases, such as:

a. When there are two or more numbers in the same category and one of them is 10 or larger, use figures for all the numbers in that category (i.e., 5, 10, 15, 20).

b. Numbers used in conjunction with slogans, serious or dignified subjects are spelled out as in: The Ten Commandments.

c. Fractions are generally spelled out if they stand alone or if they are followed by of, a, or and (i.e., half of an apple, I'll take 1/2).

d. Spell out all ordinal numbers. Ordinal numbers indicate the order of things. First, Second, and Third are examples of ordinal numbers.

e. Use numerals when writing serial numbers, military unit designations, page and chapter numbers, sport scores, etc. (i.e., 9004 ARS).

MP 2 Organize Your Thoughts

a. **Make your purpose clear.** Writing has a general purpose and a specific objective.

1. *Determine the general purpose.* Civil Air Patrol writing has three general purposes: to direct, to inform (or as questions), or to persuade. All three are concerned with who, what, when, where, why, and how. The emphasis on each differs according to the purpose. For example, a directive usually emphasizes what is to be done, informative writing stresses how something is to be done, and persuasive writing emphasizes why something should be done.

2. *Determine the specific objective.* After determining your general purpose, ask yourself, "What is my specific objective?" You may find it helpful to write it out. Specific statements such as "My objective is to get \$25,000 to expand hangar facilities," will help clarify your specific purpose for writing.

b. **Analyze Your Reader.** Who will read it? Your answer will strongly affect your ideas and your words. For example, you would not express yourself in the same way when writing to an USAF staff officer at headquarters CAP as you would to CAP cadets. What is the educational background of your reader? What is the reader's scope of experience in the area you are writing about? What reaction do you want?

c. **Define the Limits of Your Subject.** The limits you place around your subject should depend on two things: your purpose in writing and the needs of your reader.

d. **List Specific Ideas.** Write down the ideas that have been propping in and out of your mind. Do not worry about their order. Put them down as they come to you. The important thing at this stage is not to lose an idea. Once you have assembled all your ideas on the subject, check them against your purpose and subject.

e. **Group Specific Ideas under Main Ideas.** Your random list of specific ideas can be clustered around two or three broader ideas.

MP 3 Organize Your Material. Once you have gotten enough facts and information for writing, organize the material and your own ideas about that material. This step is probably the most important phase of the writing process. Without good organization, grammar and style have far less impact.

a. **Pick a Pattern.** The most common patterns are topic, time, reason, problem solving, and space.

1. *The topic pattern.* This is probably best if you are listing qualities, characteristics, or specifications.

2. *The time pattern.* This is perhaps the most familiar pattern. It is useful whenever time of the sequence of events is important.

3. *The reason pattern.* This might be your best choice if you wish to convince or persuade the reader.

4. *The problem-solution pattern.* This is a variation of the reason pattern. It usually states the problem as a question. It discusses facts bearing on the problem, proposes and tests possible solutions, and recommends specific action. It is the basic pattern of the military staff study report.

5. *The space pattern.* This is particularly useful when the information has to do with location. Some people call this the geography book approach.

b. **Arranging the Patterns.** Whether you use these patterns or your own, use these principles of arrangement:

1. Choose the one that will best communicate your ideas.
2. Use *inductive reasoning*, a general conclusion that comes from a series of specific observations.
3. Lead your reader from the familiar to the new.
4. Lead your reader from the simple to the complex.
5. Arrange your points in an order that gives maximum emphasis.

In typical writing, the end position has the greatest weight. Build your argument to a logical climax. Because the final position is the most important, it deserves your best material. However, in PAO writing of news releases the first position has the greatest weight; put your significant points first.

c. **Outline Your Material.** A good outline will help you in several ways. It will help you concentrate on one point at a time and will help keep you on course. An outline lets you write in spite of interruptions. You can write more quickly and more easily from an outline than without one.

Making such an outline is simple and easy. All you have to do is to use the main points you want to make as the framework for the outline. Then, fill in the framework with your supporting facts and ideas. Later, you will have the basis for a working outline that will make your writing noticeably easier.

MP 4 Final Steps to Organizing. Once you fit your main and supporting points into your outline, you are ready for the final steps in organizing your material. These steps are: plan for transitions, plan your introduction and plan your conclusion.

a. **Plan for Transitions.** Transitions link successive ideas, and they relate individual ideas to your overall purpose.

1. *The minor transition* links two simple elements by using a word or phrase such as "then," or "the next point." The minor transition tells the reader that a new element is coming and something about the relationship of the old to the new. Minor transitions are not always absolutely essential, but they are helpful.

2. *The major transition* relates a new main point to the overall purpose, or a sub-point to a main point. It also summarizes the last main point and sets the stage for the next main point.

b. **Plan Your Introduction.** Introductions have three things in common: they capture and stimulate the reader's interest, they focus the reader's attention on the subject, and guide the reader into the subject. The introduction also establishes a common frame of reference between writer and reader, and usually includes the statement of purpose.

c. **Plan Your Conclusion.** An effective conclusion summarizes the content and closes the writing effectively by giving it a sense of completion or resolution. If the subject is complicated or long, you may want to summarize the major points.

MP 5 Writing Your First Draft

Now that you have organized your material, you are ready to begin your first draft. The following ideas should help you write your first draft quickly and easily. Adapt and modify them to fit your needs.

a. **Start.** To eliminate the frustration of getting started, just start quickly and easily. Say to yourself, "I'll just put down the words as fast as they come and worry about the grammar and polish later."

b. **Don't Worry About the Introduction.** Just make a start and keep going. You can always go back and change your introduction or add an introduction after you have written the main part or the body.

c. **Don't Let Your Outline Slow You Down.** A good working outline is more of a sketch than a blueprint; it gives your writing plan flexibility if better ideas occur as you write. Use it to help you as you write, but do not let it delay the creative flow of ideas or words.

d. **Write One Part at a Time.** For a long piece of writing, break your material into sections (the main parts of your outline) and concentrate on only one section at a time.

e. **Write as Much as Possible at One Time.** Try to complete at least one of your major sections without interruption. If you do have to pause or have to stop, do it between paragraphs or between the larger sections of material. When you are ready to start writing again, reread what you have written.

f. **Don't Revise as You Write.** This is a separate operation that will be done later, after you finish the first draft.

g. **Use Scissors and Stapler or Tape.** Some writers get discouraged half way through a page, crumble it and throw it away. Instead of rewriting the entire page or throwing away half-used sheets, cut out the usable parts and staple or tape them where they belong in the flow of your writing. If you are using a word processor, you are very lucky!

h. **Double-Space Your Draft.** When writing your draft, quadruple-space between paragraphs, and leave generous margins at the top, bottom, and sides of the paper. This "waste" of paper gives you plenty of room to write in changes without losing time.

i. **How to Stop.** One of the cardinal rules of good writing is to know when to stop. Check your first draft against your outline to tell if the introduction, the discussion, or the conclusion is too long. Recognize and eliminate nonessential points.

Ask yourself these questions: Does your draft include enough detail for your reader? Have you clearly explained and illustrated your generalization? Have you given your reader examples of what you mean? Are your examples relevant and interesting? Are they specific and concrete? Have you stopped when you have given your reader as much information as is needed? Is the introduction adequate but not too long? Is the body complete by not too detailed? Is the conclusion adequate but not too long?

Conclusion

SUMMARY: We have gone over the process of effective writing. These are the skills necessary to write well. There are no short cuts to write effectively.

REMOTIVATION: Remember, when you write a paper for someone to read you are making an impression of yourself. Use the tools of writing effectively and the impression will be a good one.

CLOSURE: Next week, we will continue the Staff Duty Analysis for Achievement 11, with writing an article for publication.

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**PART III
LESSON REVIEW**

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S): The objective of this lesson was for each cadet to be learn the process for effective writing.

LESSON QUESTIONS: None